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Xuan Xuan Qijing



The Classic of the Mystery of the Mysterious
Yan Defu & Yan Tianzhang

Introduction

The most celebrated (though not the oldest) go manual is the Chinese "*Xuan Xuan Qijing*." It was published in 1349 by Yan Defu and Yan Tianzhang. The former was a strong go player and the latter (no relation) a collector of old go books. They made a perfect team.

The title of the book is literally "*The Classic of the Mystery of the Mysterious*", but it is an allusion to Chapter 1 of Lao Zi's "Dao De Jing" where the reference goes on to say that the mystery of the mysterious is "*the gateway to all marvels*." I prefer that as a title, especially as it is made clear in the preface that this latter phrase is meant to be called to mind, and is meant to imply that the book offers the way to mastering marvels in the form of go tesujis.

It contains, amongst other things, 387 life-and-death problems. Many are stunningly beautiful, and the book has been copied many, many times. The original is lost, and there are now several versions. There are two main texts in China, the oldest being a Ming copy. The first Japanese copy appeared in 1630, and it has appeared many times since. In the process, small changes have crept in. The Koreans also made copies and their main version contains a few problems not found elsewhere.

But the overwhelming core is unchanged, and differences are almost always minor. This must be due in part to the respect generated by the original - only a tiny handful of mistakes have been found - and partly to its almost unique feature of naming all the problems.

The significance of these names is at least twofold. They are more than pure whimsy. On the one hand they may provide a way of remembering the problem. On the other, they may give a clue to how the problem is to be solved (e.g. whether it ends in ko instead of simple death). Both features have helped perpetuate the original forms.

The names are not explained in the original. Some names are trivial, but many of the names refer to events, beliefs or symbols that would have been familiar to an educated gentleman of the time, though some would be a little testing. There is something of the cryptic crossword clue in this. We can easily imagine the exquisite pleasure felt when the combination of go problem and historical allusion was savoured and solved with friends in a pavilion overlooking a tranquil lake, aided perhaps by a little wine.

I am going to present some of these problems, one by one. For obvious reasons I am going to have to explain the names and the allusions. It may not be possible, therefore, to recreate the original pleasures presented by the problems, but I hope it will create enjoyment of another kind, and help you remember the marvellous tesujis.

I will begin with one of my own favourite combinations of problem and name.

John Fairbairn

盧水擒縱

Problem #1

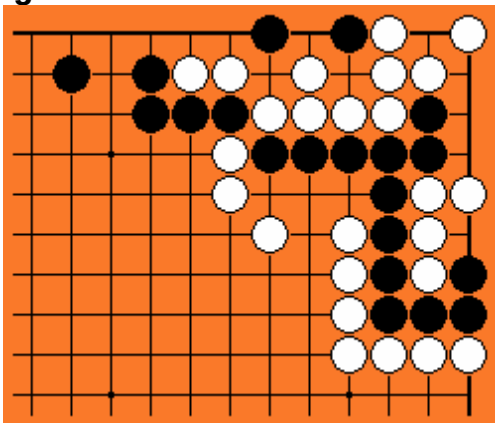
CAPTURE AND RELEASE AT LU RIVER

Lu River is in Yunnan Province, home of the famous go stones. This title refers to Zhuge Liang's campaign in Annam, and possibly as far as Burma, when he repeatedly captured and released the Burmese general Meng Leng.

At Ningnan there is a river called the Black Water, where there is today said to be an almost inaccessible cave with a rusty-looking bronze sword suspended from the ceiling. Legend has it that it was left there by Zhuge, then prime minister of the ancient kingdom of Sichuan. He lived in the Three Kingdoms era (220-265) and his name is still a byword in China today for brilliant statesmanship.

He led seven expeditions from Chengdu to try to conquer a barbarian (i.e. non-Chinese) tribe in the Xichang area. He captured the chieftain of this tribe seven times, and each time he released him, hoping to win him over by his magnanimity. Six times the chieftain was unmoved and continued his rebellion, but after the seventh time he became wholeheartedly loyal to the Sichuan Chinese.

The moral of the legend in its modern interpretation is that to conquer a people one must conquer their hearts and minds. In the go problem it has a simpler meaning (concentrate only on capture and release - ignore the reference to sixes and sevens), but is just as apposite.

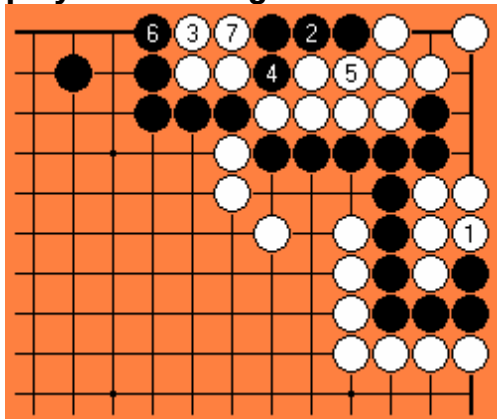


White to play.

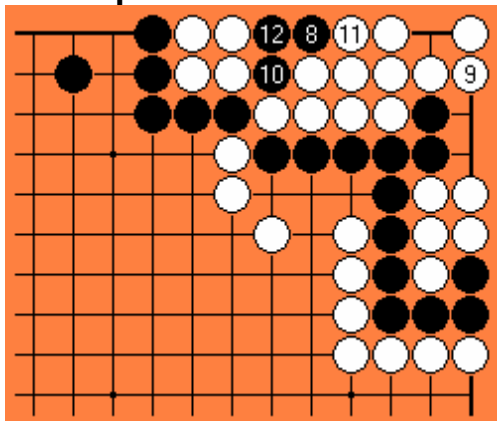
PROBLEM #1 - SOLUTION

White 1 is the only way to start, making a bulky five killing shape. Black therefore has to kill the white group above in order to live - apparent escape. Remember that in a race to capture a bulky five gives Black 8 liberties to play with.

White 3 is the first "hard" move. Black 4 is forced, because if White plays there he gets a seki. First recapture by White.

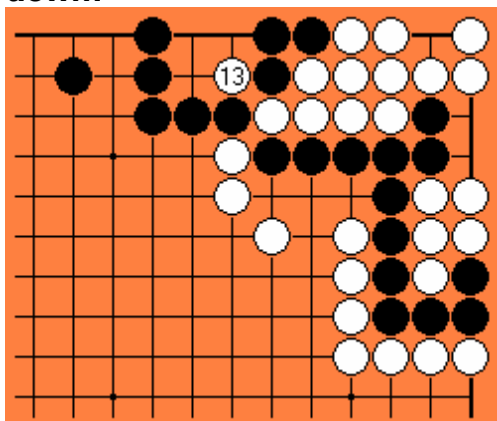


The Japanese newspaper Shukan Go (Go Weekly) has a neat way of categorising problems. Those that can be solved at a glance with a single telling move rate one star (easy). Those that involve a single "trick" or technique of some kind rate two stars (moderately hard). Three stars are reserved for problems that involve two or more techniques or killer moves: two-stage or three-stage problems.



This problem is one of these hard three-stage problems. The first stage was the easy killer move 1. The second stage involved the technique of seki. Now the third stage begins with Black 8, which is a sort of killer

move you should spot at a glance. The real technique, though, comes on White's part when he calmly plays 2, letting Black apparently escape again. Only for White 13 - the sword of Zhuge Liang - to come thudding down.



I challenge you now ever to forget this problem!

This sort of under-the-stones technique is now meat and drink even to amateur dan players, especially as so many problem books give so many examples - rather more often than their occurrence in real play deserves.

But over 600 years ago, with no problem books around, being able to demonstrate such a position was probably a marvelous way for a strong player to appear like a conjurer at a children's party. There was a more serious edge to it, though. It is no accident that the title of the book is from a Daoist classic. There was great interest in Daoism at the time, especially among the class that like to play go. The Daoist fancy for techniques of immortality would have been tickled by problems of this type, where apparently dead stones come back to life.

Certainly there are many such problems in Gateway to All Marvels, and this has been an appropriate way to start our journey into the mystery of the mysterious.

彩雲勢

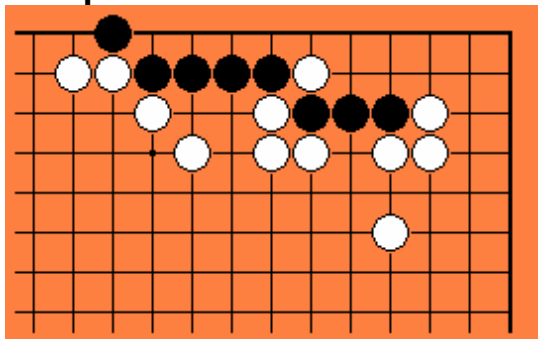
COLOURED CLOUDS

This is one of the many problems that describe the formation of the stones rather than hint at the solution, but, still, this helps you memorise the position. You will no doubt recognise the wispy horizontal cloud shape from the pictures on the wall in your local Chinese takeaway.

But there is another level of meaning. The phrase coloured (or variegated) clouds is from a poem, "Setting out Early from Baidi City", by Li Bai, along with Du Fu one of China's two most famous poets. Remote Baidi, high up on the Zhudang Gorge, was where he had been exiled. He had just been amnestied and was preparing to hurry home. His poem runs: "In early morning I left Baidi amid its coloured clouds, to return in but a day to Jiangling, a thousand leagues away. Monkeys chatter ceaselessly on either side of the gorge's walls, and my unburdened boat has already passed ten thousand sombre mountains."

The single white stone on the edge is Li Bai (note that Bai means White), and it too has to return home down a narrow gorge.

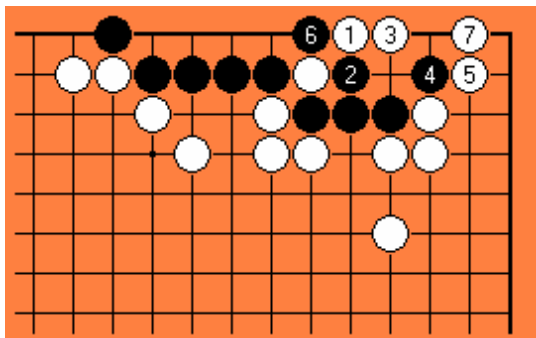
This problem is rated as low-dan level.



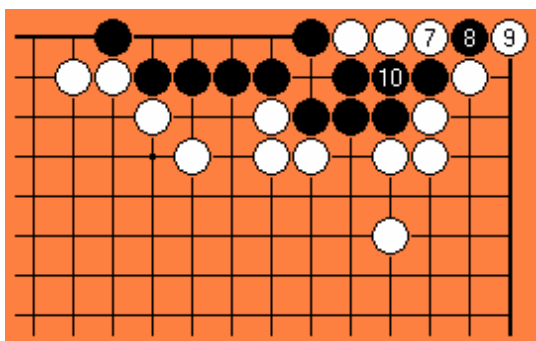
White to play.

PROBLEM #2 - SOLUTION

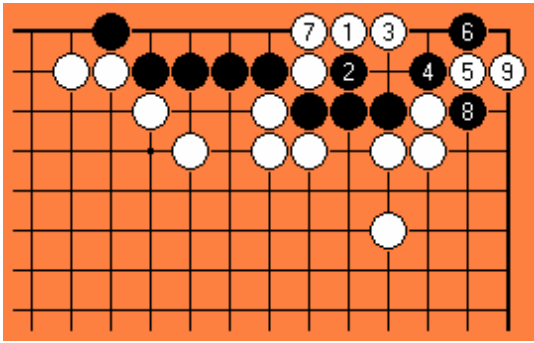
White 1, following the proverb of playing in the centre of three stones, is the initial tesuji. There are two plausible replies by Black. The original just mentions one: the atari at 2. White 3 is then important and Black 4 and White 5 are obvious follow-ups. Now the simplest move is Black 6 but this is met by White 7. Li Bai is home and dry.



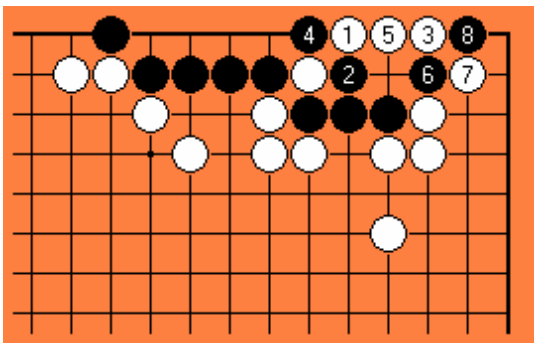
This White 7 is a mistake: Black's thrown-in 8 sets up a large capture in the corner.



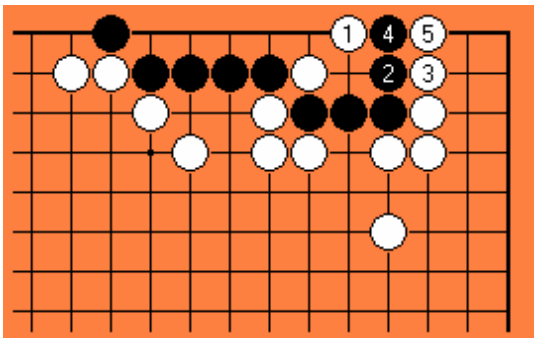
The variation in the original involves a slightly more exotic but still futile Black 6:



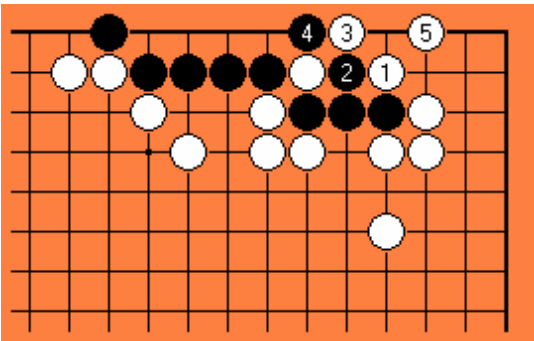
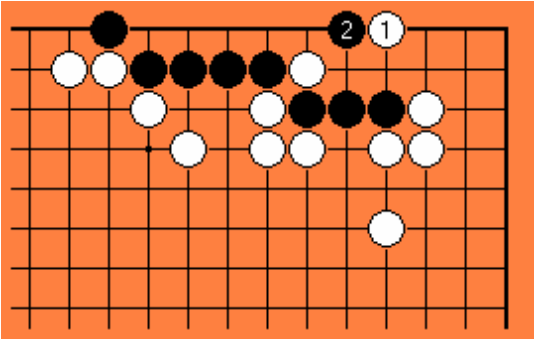
White 3 above cannot be as in the next diagram for the same reason:



Black 2 in the following diagram fails, as shown:



And White 1 likewise in the following two diagrams fails, in the second case because it only ends in ko:



五曜呈祥

Problem #3

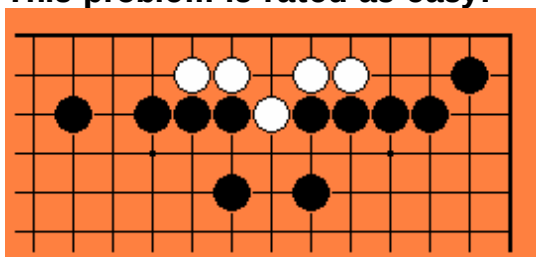
THE FIVE LIGHTS OF HEAVEN BETOKEN GOOD LUCK

This refers to the five planets Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Venus and Mercury. They are said to betoken good luck when they appear together.

At one level this name is merely representational: "five" for the five white stones, of course, "stars" reminds you they are white, and "good luck" implies they can live.

There is, however, at another level, a hint to the solution. But maybe it was too obscure even for the ancient Chinese, because the problem is known in a slightly different form in one tradition - see at the end of the solution.

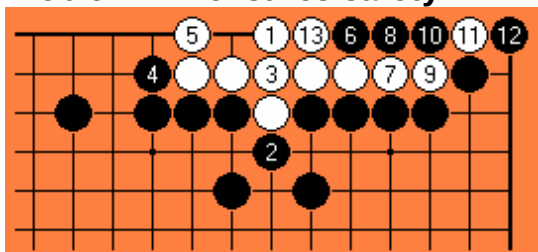
This problem is rated as easy.



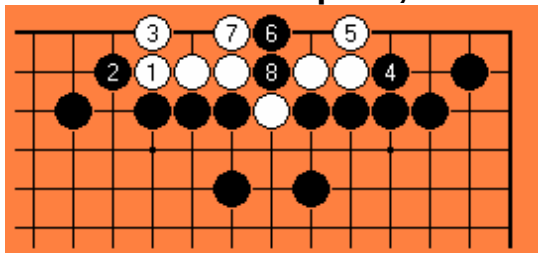
White to play.

PROBLEM #3 - SOLUTION

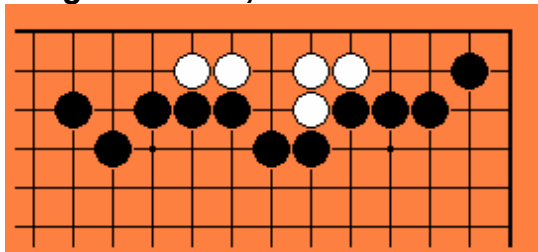
White 1 makes a sort of star shape - the clue from the Lights of Heaven. The solution thereafter is relatively straightforward: Black 6 is the only possible hope, but the throw-in at White 11 - a technique we also saw in Problem 2 - ensures safety.



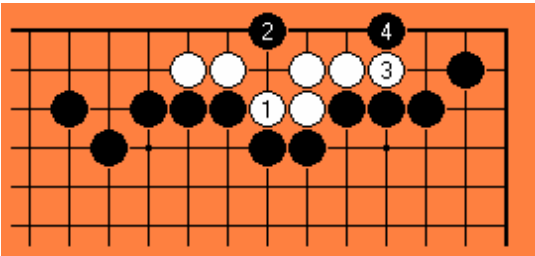
Extending your eye space is normally a good idea, but not if you surrender the vital point, Black 6 here.



The different version of this problem, which appears for example in the Ming collection, is shown below:



The solution is almost a carbon copy of the first version, but there is one more unsuccessful option for White to consider, which perhaps makes the problem a trifle harder, though at the expense of losing the cryptic clue.



清遠勢

Problem #4

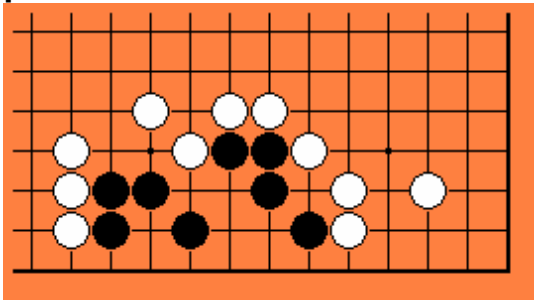
CLEAR AND FAR

Or abstruse but lucid. This notion is from a commentary on the Book of Changes (Yi Jing), hexagram 53 - "When geese advance to the heights they cannot be disturbed or deflected; there will be good fortune." The commentary says this implies gradual but sure progress. That is a hint for the solution.

All educated Chinese would have been very familiar with the Yi Jing. Hexagram 53 is shown below. Hexagrams are read from the bottom up. Broken line 1 typifies a shy bride going to her new home, or a young officer on his first posting, A demure start is appropriate. The commentary also sees this as wild geese lumbering into flight. Line 2 continues the seem, but in Line 3 the geese reach the solid line, dry land... and so on.



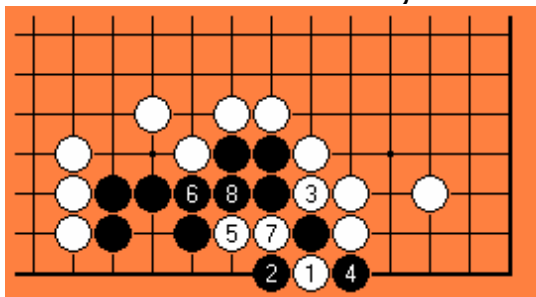
The 64 Yi Jing hexagrams provide a complex set of thought templates to help guide you towards a solution. Or prophecies if you believe that sort of thing, but the thought guide is good enough for this particular problem. It is rated as low-dan level.



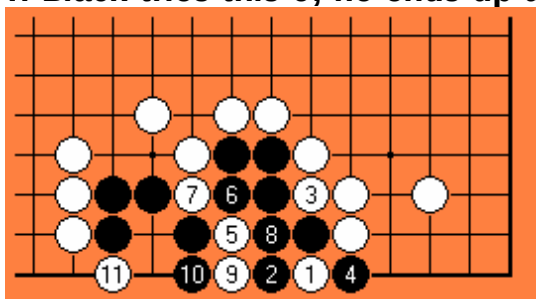
White to play

PROBLEM #4 - SOLUTION

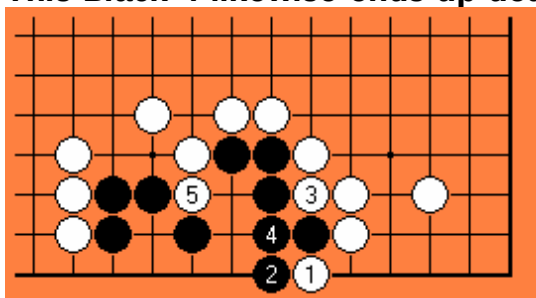
White's first three moves neatly match the lines of the hexagram: slow, slow, then success - but with further to go. Black 6 is the best reply, and the correct result is a ko, with White 9 at 1.



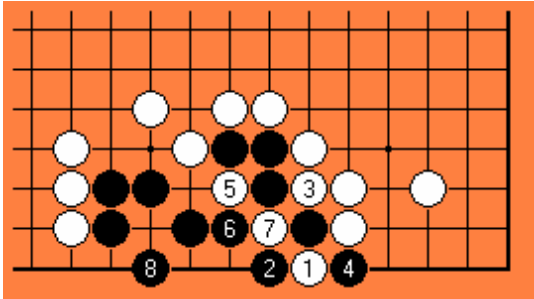
If Black tries this 6, he ends up dead.



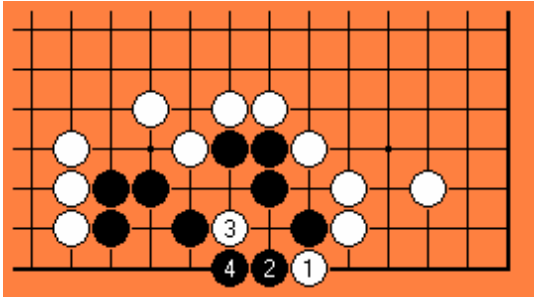
This Black 4 likewise ends up dead because of shortage of liberties.



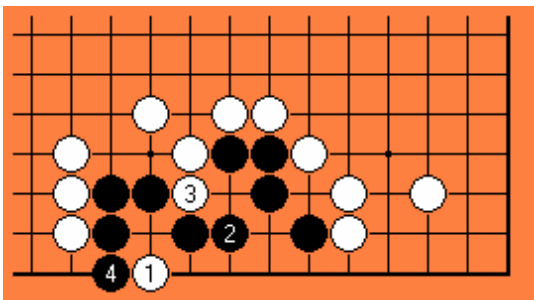
For White, slow, slow, slow is not good enough - this White 5 needs to change pace and become a more "masculine" (solid) line. Black's way of finding life brings up goosepimples of pleasure!



What if White starts off with a broken line then a solid line? Failure!



And what if he starts off with a solid line? Failure again.



二桃殺三士

Problem #5

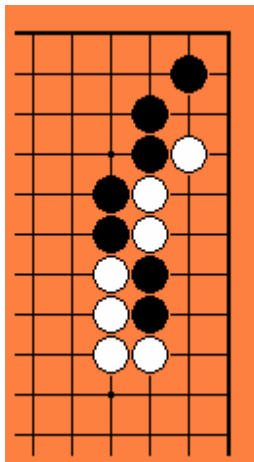
THE TWO PEACH TREES AND THE THREE MINISTERS

Obviously this describes the capturing race between the two black stones and the three white ones, but again there is also a hidden clue to the solution. The phrase implies killing someone by means of an unusual plan. Specifically, it relates to an ingenious plan of Yan Zi (also called Yan Ying) of the Qi dynasty. He died in 493 BC. He was a statesman in the service of the Dukes of Qi, and was renowned for his wise administration and love of economy. He is classed by the Grand Historian Sima Qian with Guan Zhong as a model of statesmanship.

The story of this plan, as it stands, seems preposterous, or else there are some significant details that have to be supplied. But for what it's worth, he is supposed to have got rid of three rival ministers, Gongsun Jie, Tian Kaijiang, Gu Yezi, who stood in the way of his own advancement.

By some cunning device, he persuaded the Duke of Qi to offer two peaches to those of his counsellors who could show they had the best claim. At first only two came forward and they each received and ate one of the coveted peaches. Then the third rival presented himself and proved his merits were at least as great, whereupon the first two slew themselves from loss of face. The survivor, indignant that such noble men should have been sacrificed for the sake of peaches, also promptly committed suicide.

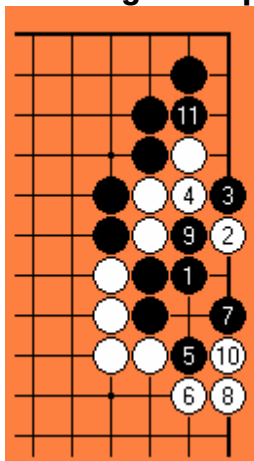
This problem does not involve suicide, but try equating loss of face with loss of liberties.



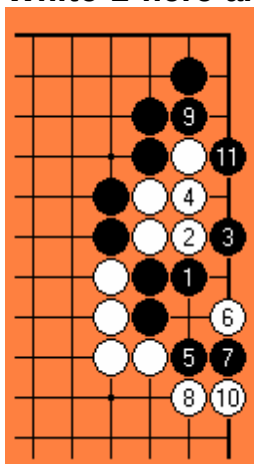
Black to play

PROBLEM #5 - SOLUTION

Black 1 is the only move, and White 2 is the cleverest defence. But Black 3 is even cleverer. It forces White 4. If Black omits this 3-4 exchange and plays 5 at once, White can play 6 at 7.



White 2 here also fails. The three ministers die.

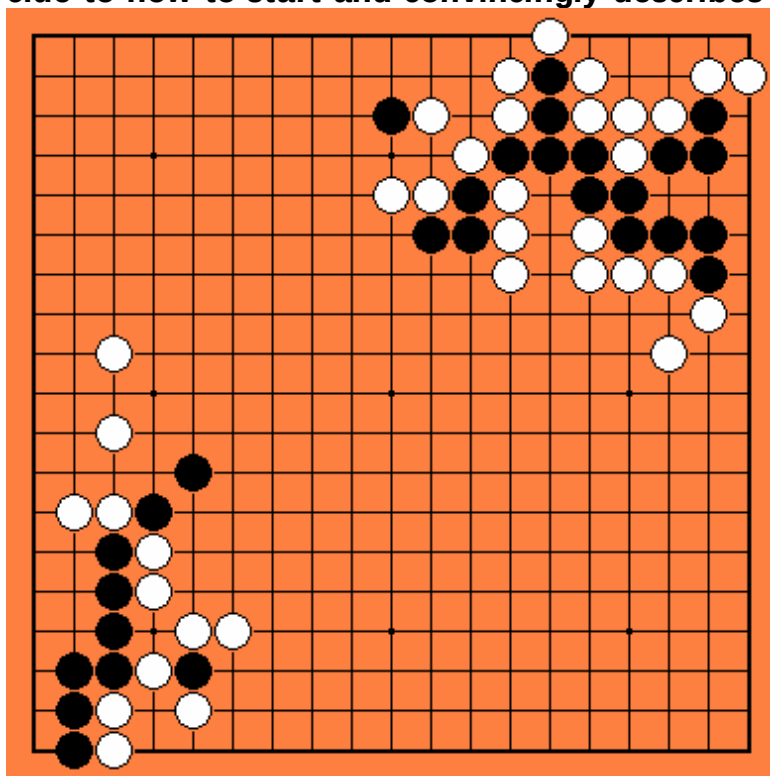


潮源翻浪

Problem #6

THE SOURCE OF THE CURRENT AND THE ROLLING WAVES

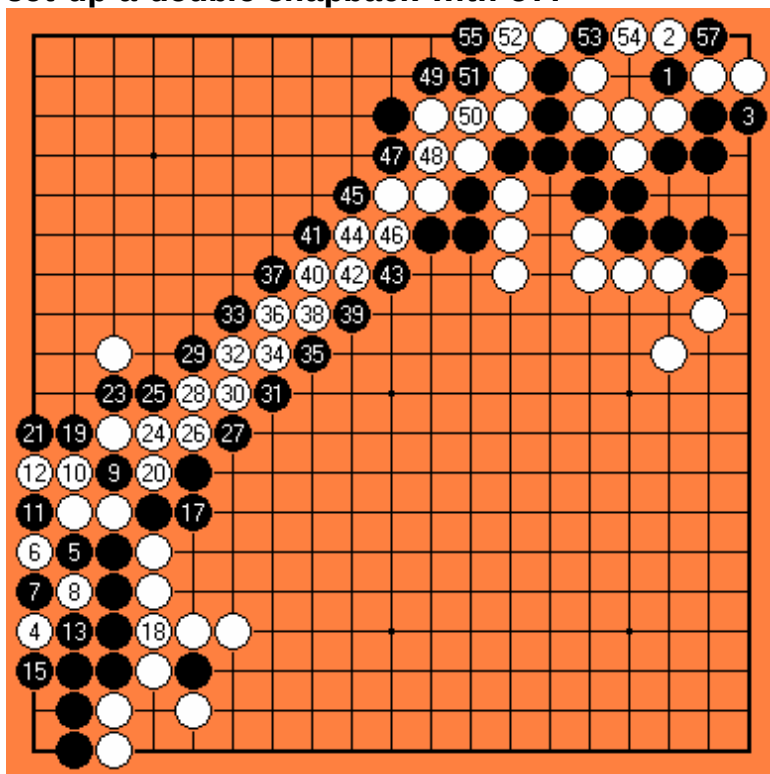
Not as evocative as Zhuang Zi's image of a butterfly flapping its wings and eventually thereby causing a storm, but we have here the same idea of a domino effect: an extra drop of water at the source can lead to tumultuous billows. Cause-and-effect was clearly something that fascinated the Daoist alchemists. The imagery in this case both gives a clue to how to start and convincingly describes the massive effect.



Black to play

PROBLEM #6 - SOLUTION

First, Black makes sure his bigger group lives with 1 and 3, though 1 - the drop in the ocean - has a bigger import. Naturally, White then turns to try to kill the other group. But Black's responses turn into a billowing wave that crashes back across the board - where Black 1 allows him to set up a double snapback with 57.



14 = 7; 16 = 11; 22 = 9; 56 = 53

荆山玉勢

Problem #7

THE JING SHAN JADE

This refers to a famous jewel. A block of jadestone was discovered by Bian He of the state of Chu in the 8th century BC in the mountains of Jing Shan. He hastened to present it to his ruler but the stone was declared not to be genuine and Bian was sentenced to amputation of his right foot as an imposter.

When the next sovereign took the throne, Bain He again tried to presented the jade, but it was once more rejected and his left foot was chopped off.

Then a third sovereign came to the throne. This time, Bian He wept at the palace gate. On being asked why, he said his tears were not because of his own mutilation but because a true jewel had been rejected as false, and a loyal subject branded as a deceiver. The new Lord of Chu therefore had the stone thoroughly tested, whereupon it was found to be a jadestone of the purest kind. Bian He was offered a title, but declined it. The stone, however, was dubbed the He Shi jade and became a crown jewel which further appeared in history in an even more famous episode.

By the time of that episode the stone was in the possession of the King of Zhao. The King of Qin - the man who was to become the first Emperor of China - coveted the jewel, and sent an emissary in 283 BC to demand it in return for 15 cities. Zhao's ministers knew it was a trick, and that they would never get the cities if they gave up the stone. But if they refused, they would be attacked. However, one of the stewards, Lin Xiangru, volunteered to take the jewel to Qin and to secure the cities.

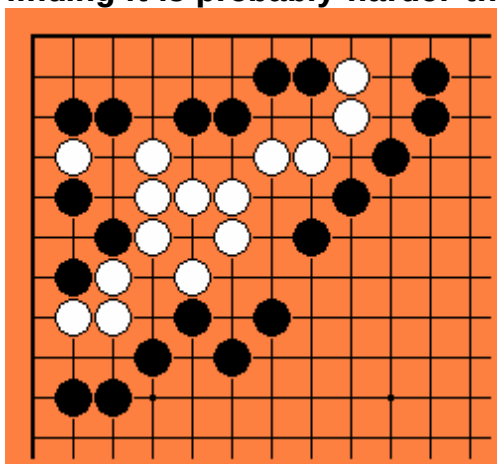
On arrival at the Qin court, he presented the jewel, and the King of Qin was so taken by it, he passed it round and ignored Lin, saying nothing of the 15 cities - as Lin had anticipated. So Lin spoke up. He said there was actually a flaw in the jade that was very hard to see. He would show it if the jade could be passed back to him. But once he had it in his hands he rushed behind a pillar and lambasted the King for not having kept his promise over the 15 cities. The King, embarrassed in front of his court, had to repeat his promise publicly. But Lin rubbed in his advantage, and said that the King of Zhao, out of respect for the stone, had fasted for five days before handing it over. The King of Qin ought to fast likewise before accepting it. The King again had to agree or lose face.

In those five days, however, Lin had the jade smuggled back to Zhao and then brazenly told the King of Qin that what he had done was because he suspected more trickery. The King could only punish Lin at the risk of destroying relations with Zhao for ever, in which he might never get the jade. So he allowed Lin to return home, where the steward had honours heaped on him. The transaction eventually took place.

The story extends even beyond there. It is told in Sima Qian's "Records of the Historian" but is well known to many Chinese even today as it forms the plot of a popular Beijing opera.

None of this seems to have much relevance to a go problem. Nevertheless, the first part of the story, about Bian He, is a metaphor for something of great difficulty. This is a hard problem, rated at high-dan level by Takagi Shoichi 9-dan (there are harder, professional level problems in the book, though). It appears in a slightly different form in some editions, but the version we present here, as more in keeping with the spirit of the title, is from the oldest (Ming) edition.

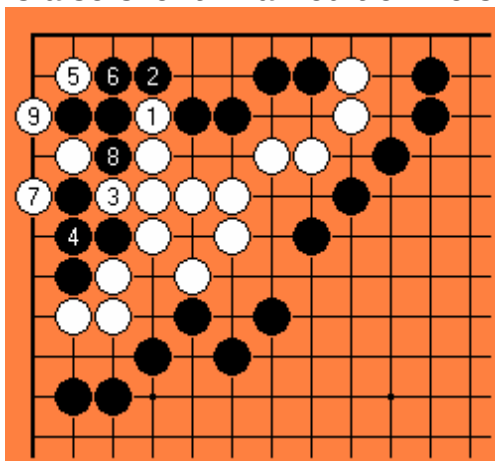
There is another clue, but until you become familiar with the book, finding it is probably harder than the problem itself.



White to play.

PROBLEM #7 - SOLUTION

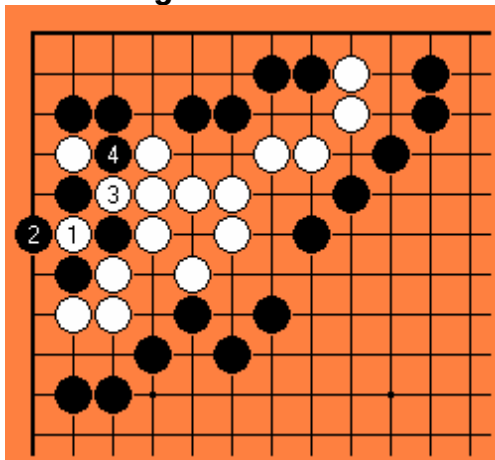
First the "simple" solution that appears in the original, but also in a recent edition commented by Ma Xiaochun 9-dan. Ma points out flaws in some of the original solutions, but says nothing here. Chen Zude 9-dan is also silent in an edition he supervised. The result is ko.



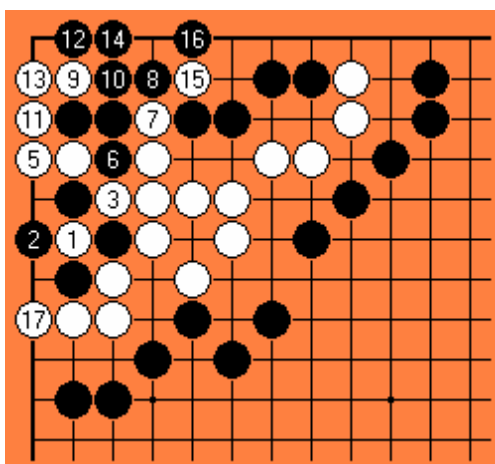
But Takagi Shoichi offers a completely different, and rather more complex, solution, and he in turn says nothing about the line shown above. Hashimoto Utarō 9-dan gives a similar line to Takagi, but starting from a slightly different position.

The result is still ko, but there seems, perhaps, to be a Chinese tradition and a Japanese tradition here, and maybe the Japanese version of the solution can be adjudged a better ko. You are invited to judge for yourselves.

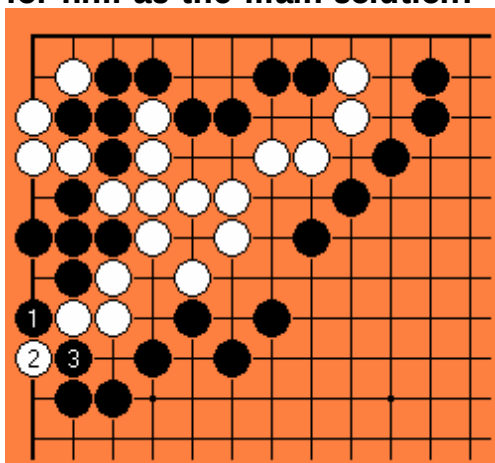
The Takagi solution is as follows. The simplest version first:



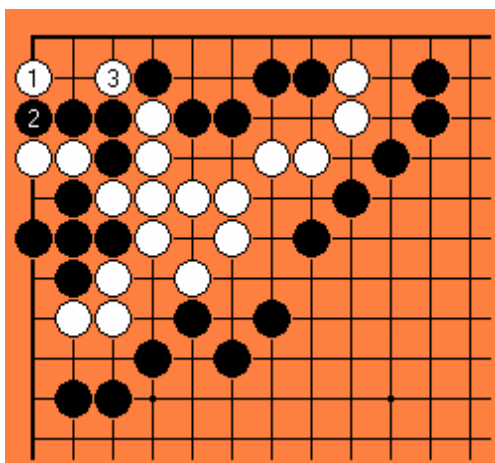
But he says that Black's resistance with 4 at 1 best shows the nature of the problem, though White lives unconditionally:



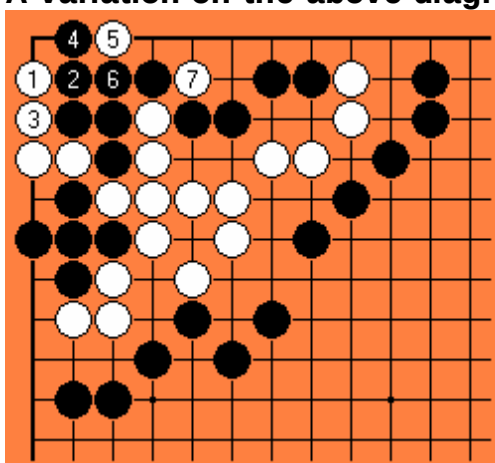
Black can still get a ko in this line if he plays 1 here, but it is not as good for him as the main solution:



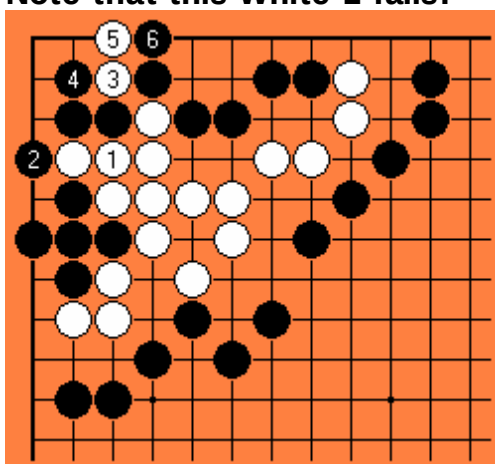
White 1 here also works, as it happens:



A variation on the above diagram:

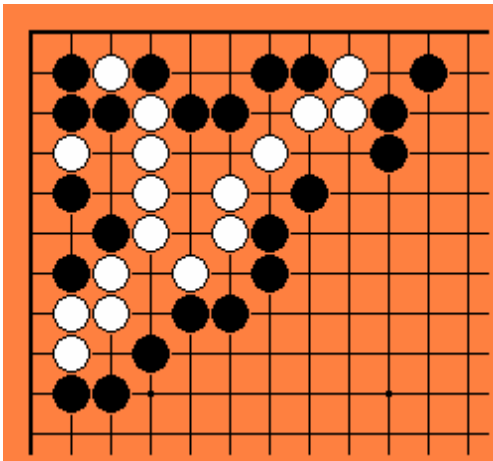


Note that this White 1 fails:



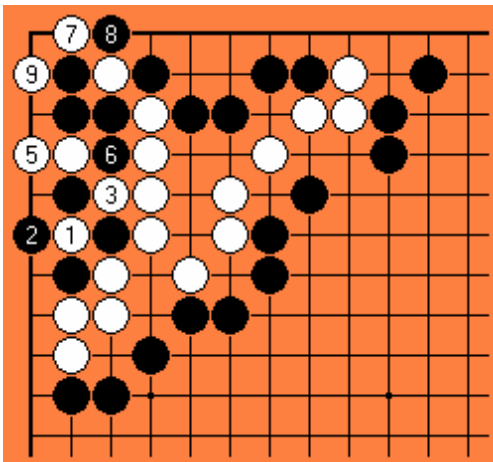
For reference, here is the problem as presented in the Hashimoto

edition:



His solution (still ko). What is intriguing about this version is that you can view the two black groups separated by White 5 as Bian He's two chopped-off feet.

Black 4 is at 1.



That hidden clue that was mentioned? Nowadays, problems are usually marked distinctly "White to play and live" or "White to play and get a ko." In Gateway to All Marvels there is no such distinction; the marking is simply "White to play". However, it is noticeable whenever there is a ko that there is something, either in the title or in the allusion, that hints at toing and froing or vacillation of some form. In this case, the Zhao-Qin dispute over the jewel provides the hint. You may regard this as too fanciful, but familiarity with the book may eventually change your mind - a sort of mental ko!

This is an amazingly fecund position once you see these variations, but there is still the niggling question: have some pros missed something? This may be a good problem to discuss on the MSO message board.

Problem #8

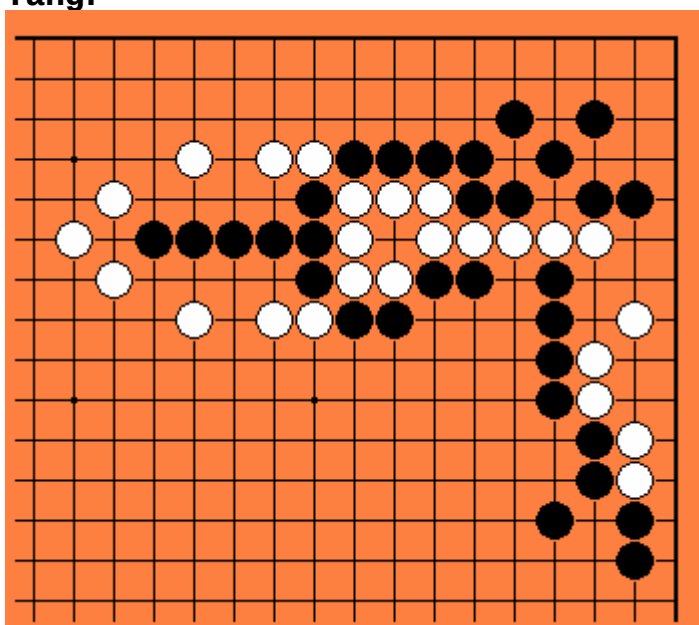
克用歸唐

KEYONG SUBMITS TO THE TANG COURT

Li Keyong (d. 908) was a renowned commander of the latter years of the Tang dynasty - a period when the Chinese were constantly being challenged by "barbarians." The Chinese themselves had opted for culture over war, giving higher rank to civil officials than military men. While the Empire was at peace this was not a problem. With restless tribes constantly harrying them, it was.

A common tactic was to employ alien tribesmen as mercenaries. Li Keyong's father was one. He was a chieftain of the Sha Tuo tribe occupying a region near Lake Balkash. He was employed by the Chinese in 847 and was prominent in repelling an invasion by the Tufan (Tibetans). In 869 the Emperor Yi Zong rewarded him by bestowing upon him the Imperial surname Li and the name Guochang.

His son, Keyong, also rendered valiant service in suppressing the rebellion of Huang Chao. He too enjoyed Imperial rewards. He excelled in archery, and marvellous tales were told of his skill. But he lost the sight of one eye and became known as the One-eyed Dragon. Dragon is also a Chinese go term for a large group. The white group here on the right is the one-eyed dragon, but it will be made to submit to the black Tang.

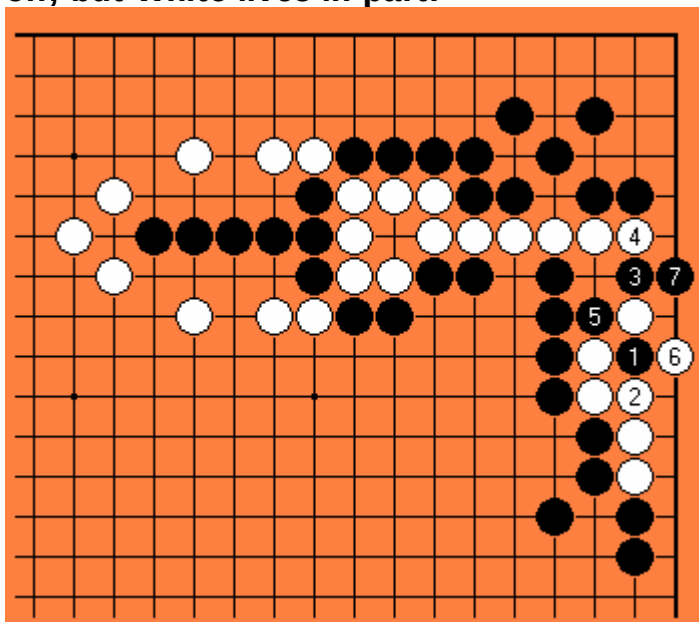


Black to play.

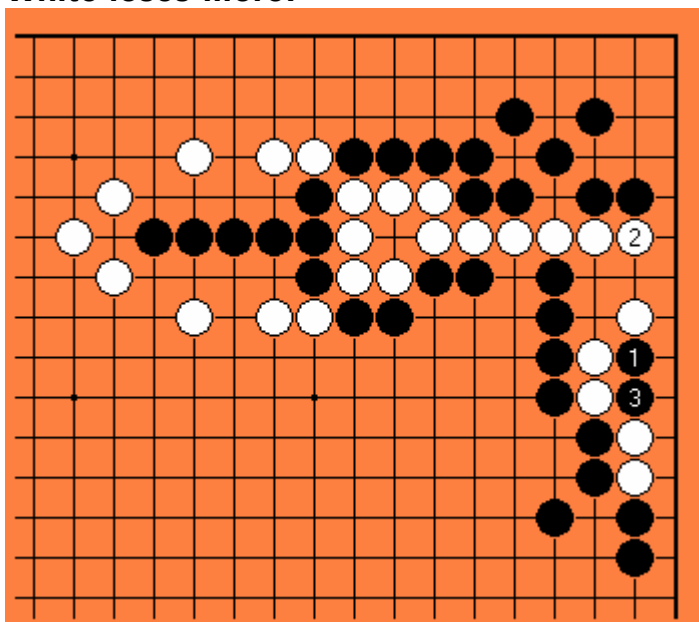
PROBLEM #8 - SOLUTION

This problem has two themes. One is breaking White's connection on the side. The other is making sure Black can win the capturing race.

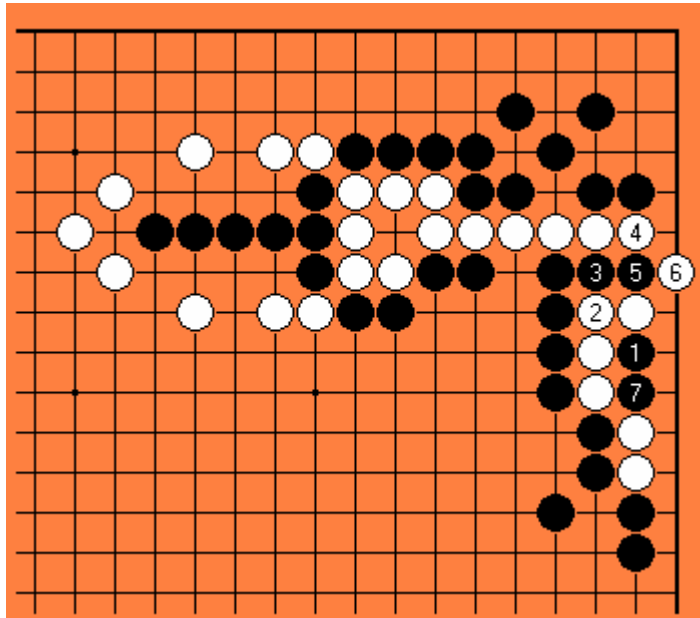
The original shows only this solution, where the one-eyed dragon is cut off, but White lives in part.



In this case, the capturing race is more to the fore. Black still wins it and White loses more.



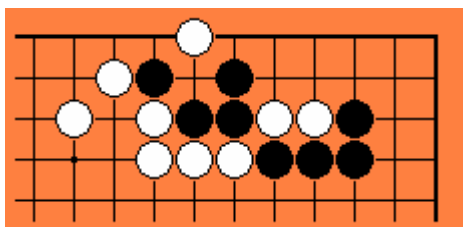
A variation:



玉鈎勢

Problem #9 JADE HOOK

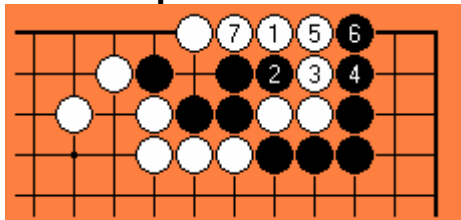
"Jade" is a general epithet of approval in ancient Chinese. The phrase "jade hook" was sometimes used of a crescent moon, but that does not seem to be the intent here. "Hook" is a straightforward (if that is the right word!) clue to the solution.



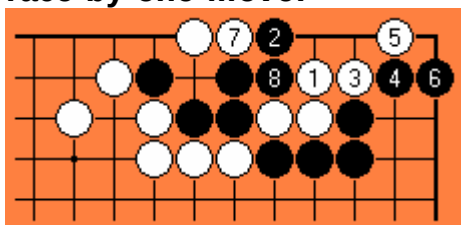
White to play

PROBLEM #9 - SOLUTION

The vital point is 1. With this, White can catch Black inside his hook.



This White 1 fails. Now Black takes the vital point and wins the capturing race by one move.



七子之母

Problem #10

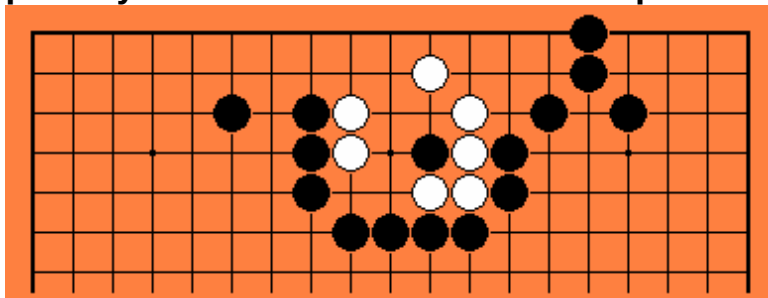
MOTHER OF SEVEN SONS

This is a reference to a poem in the Book of Odes, Odes of Pei, Kai Feng
I will quote Legge's translation here:

*The genial wind from the south
Blows on the heart of the jujube tree.
Our mother is wise and good,
But among us there is none good.
There is the cool spring
Below the city of Jun.
We are seven sons, and our mother is full of pain and
suffering.*

The commentary tells us that this ode is in praise of filial sons, but
"Such were the dissolute ways of Wei that even a mother of seven sons
could not rest in her house."

The seven white stones are the sons (the Chinese word for son and
stone is the same) and probably the surrounded black stone symbolises
the mother (dark colours are female in yin yang), but there is also
possibly a hint at the solution in the explanation.

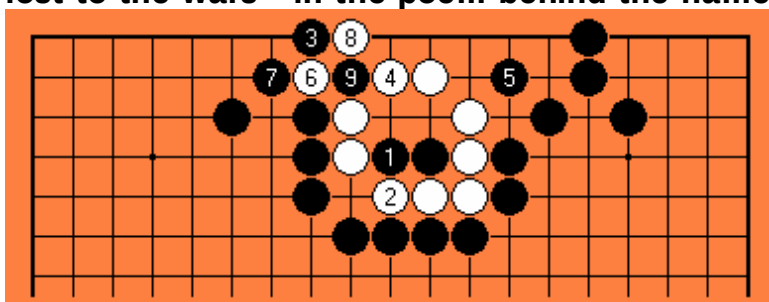


Black to play

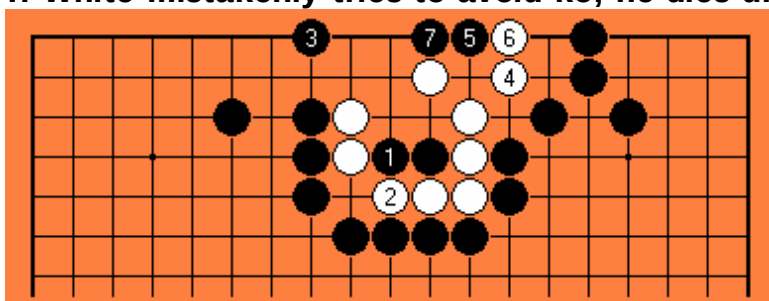
PROBLEM #10 - SOLUTION

A nice feature of this problem is that, although it is necessary to start in the centre with Black 1 and White 2, the real focus shifts sharply to the first line, and Black 3 is the key move. First-line tesujis are normally to do with connections, and it is unusual for them to be eye-stealing tesujis, as here.

The best result for both sides is ko, possibly (I would say probably) hinted at in the reference to the restless house - sons repeatedly being lost to the wars - in the poem behind the name.



If White mistakenly tries to avoid ko, he dies unconditionally.



清丘勢

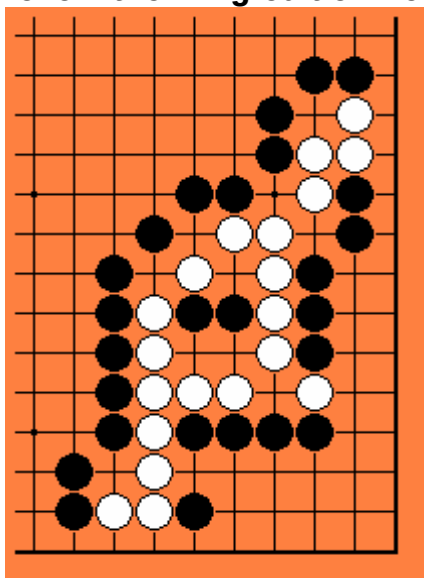
Problem #11

CONSECRATION HILL

A place, some say, in the south east of Puyang County, Hebei Province. Others put it at Daming in Zhili, but it is where a famous vow of mutual protection was consecrated by ministers of the four states Jin, Song, Wei and Cao in the 12th year of Duke Xuan of Lu (596 BC).

The commentators say it was the first ever diplomatic alliance; but as the states did not keep their word the ministers' names are not recorded. The allusion is to the weakest member being isolated and attacked.

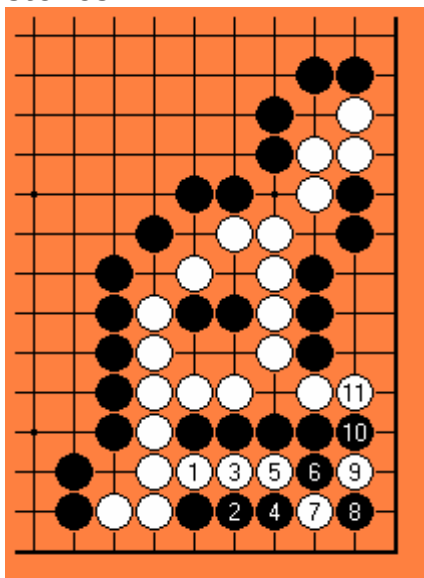
This problem, which exists in slightly different variants (we normally follow the Ming edition here) is rated as low-dan level.



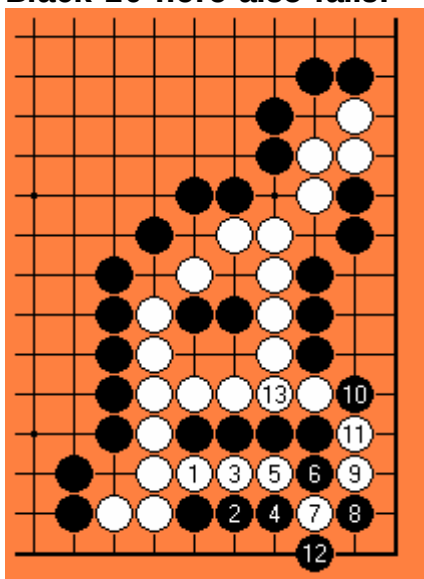
White to play.

PROBLEM #11 - SOLUTION

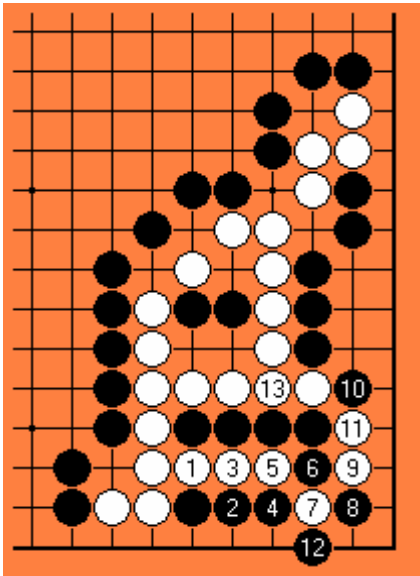
The slow move White 1 is not the sort of move one normally expects to solve hard problems, but the tactic of attacking the weakest member of the Black alliance works here. White lives by cutting off some black stones.



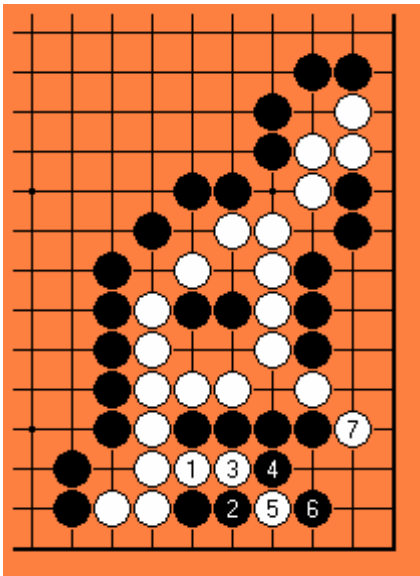
Black 10 here also fails.



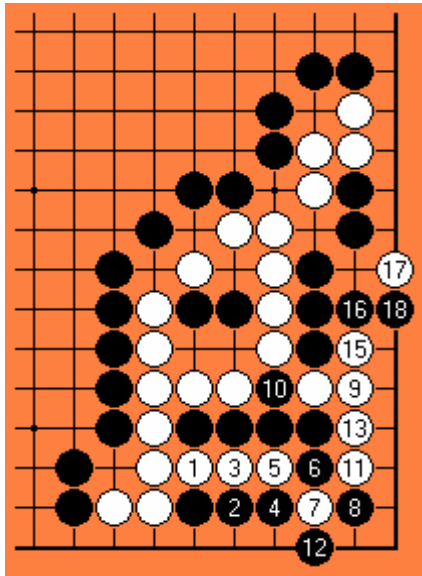
Black 8 here fails.



Another Black failure.



The cut at White 9 is important. This diagram shows why - White loses the capturing race by one move.



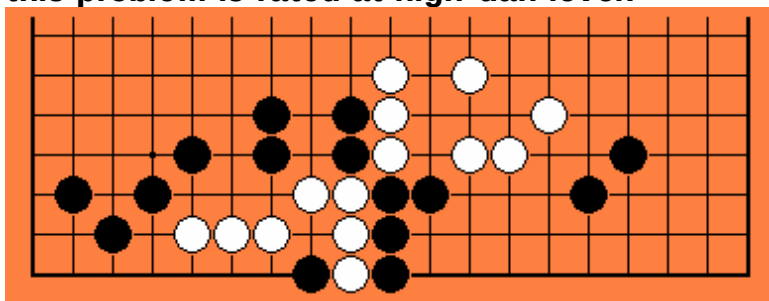
We will omit a diagram for this, but note that if White starts with Black 2 in the first diagram, Black plays at 1 and wins.

Problem #12

野猿過水

WILD APES CROSSING THE RIVER

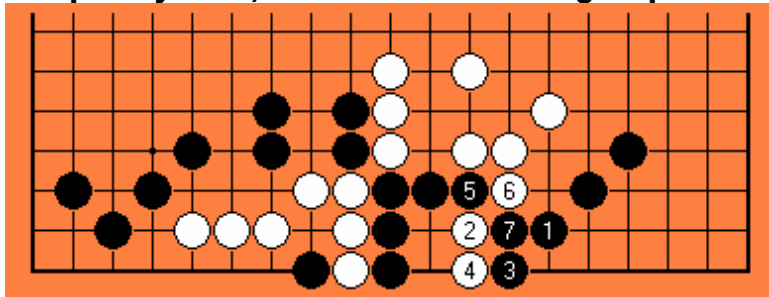
The ancient Chinese were possibly more dedicated naturalists than the telly addicts and documentary makers of today - they copied animal movements to create many of their martial arts. They also observed the habit of apes linking hands to cross a stream and realised it made rather a good go tactic. But as with the apes, great intelligence is called for: this problem is rated at high-dan level.



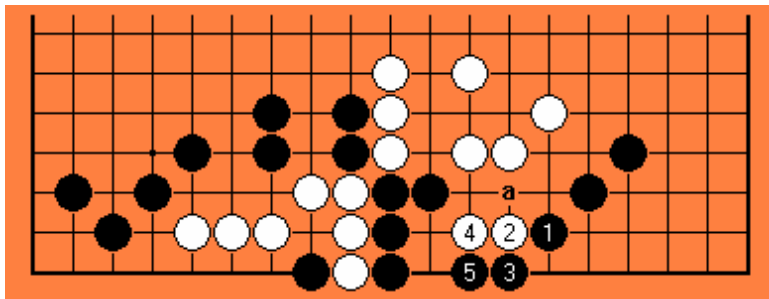
Black to play

PROBLEM #12 - SOLUTION

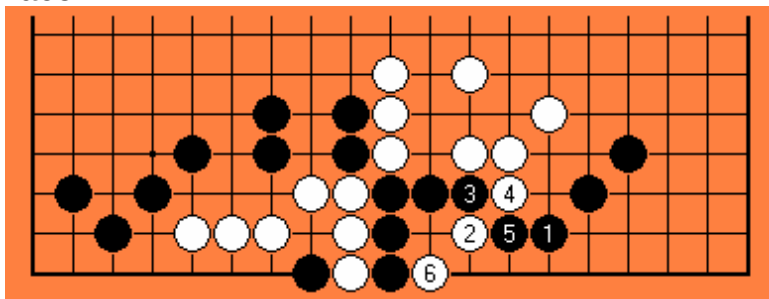
Linking underneath with Black 1 and 3 is the solution, but the tricky bit is realising that, although it ends in a seki-type stand-off, this is only a temporary seki, because the white group to the left has only one eye.



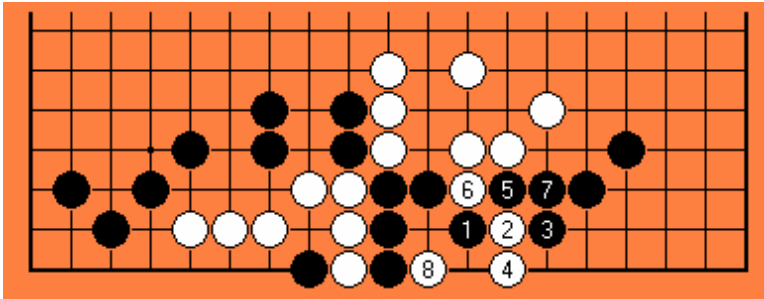
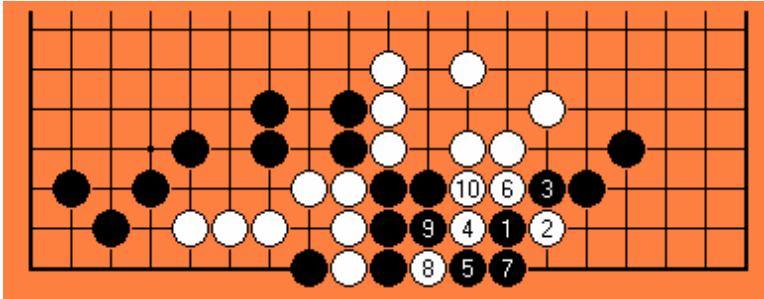
White 2 here fails even more quickly. If White tries 4 at 5, Black simply ataris at 'a'.



If Black tries to swing through the trees at 3, White wins the capturing race.



You should clearly understand White's tesujis in the following two diagrams, where Black starts off with the wrong move, if you want to say you have mastered this problem as well as the apes. You may wish to read the story of the white ape that could play go, elsewhere on this site.



There are variants of this problem in which the white group on the left appears in a different, but still one-eyed, shape.

Problem #13

洞庭秋月

DONGTING HARVEST MOON

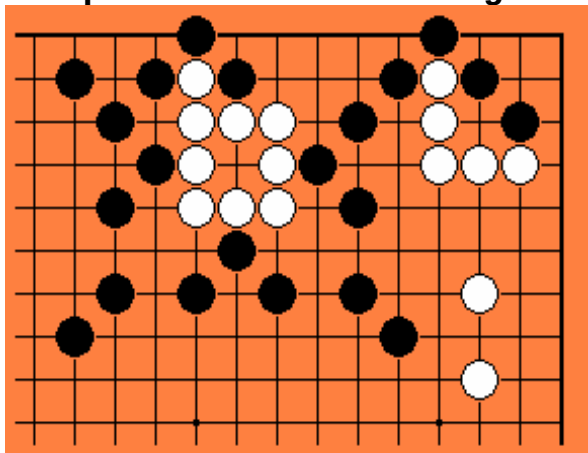
This is the sort of problem you rarely see in modern problem books, though it is typical of many in *Gateway To All Marvels*.

It is a graphic description of a harvest moon reflected in the dark, rippling waters of Lake Dongting, China's largest lake, in Huainan, central China. It therefore contains many stones placed purely for picturesque effect. Such effects are anathema to modern problem setters who prefer minimalist positions.

There is no real clue to the solution, but it may help - perhaps more in remembering the solution as it is rather a hard problem - to think of a beam of light from the moon suddenly caught by a ripple in the water.

The harvest moon also brought out poets and drinkers to view its charm. We may safely assume this problem was composed by a master as his contribution to such an evening, and it is pleasant to imagine the excitement he must have felt as he made his way to the party, anticipating the gasps of astonishment the solution would have brought.

This problem is not in the *Ming edition*.



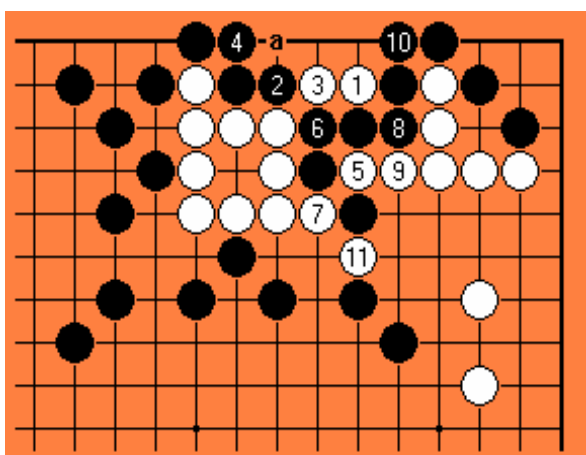
White to play

PROBLEM #13 - SOLUTION

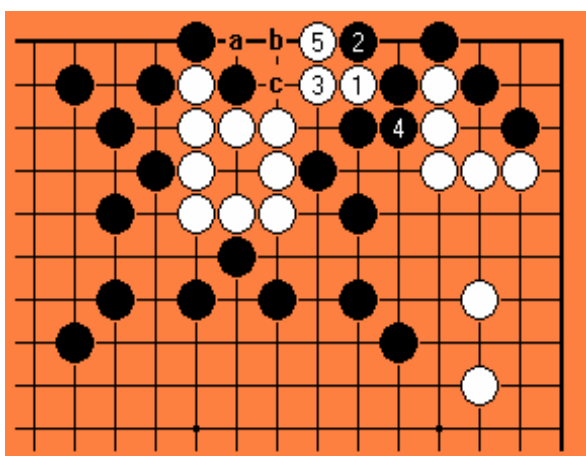
As befits a *moon problem*, a brilliancy is needed for move 1. But which is stronger - moonlight or water?

It also seems fitting that the answer to such an unresolvable question is ko. If Black plays 2 at 3, White plays 2 and Black 'a' makes the ko.

That is the basic solution, but full mastery means seeing what happens if Black plays 2. White can connect out but it takes another brilliant move at 5 to do so. If Black 6 is at 9, White cuts at 8.



This Black 2 produces a different ko. If Black connects 2, White lives as easy as 'a', 'b', 'c'. Black 2 at 4 allows White an easy life with 'c', 'a', 'b', 2.



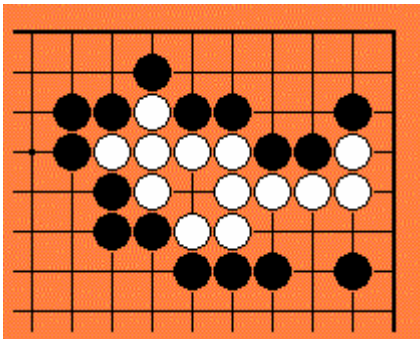
Problem #14

WANG QIAO SEEKS THE IMMORTALS

Wang Qiao, a famous Daoist recluse, was said to have been the designation of Prince Jin, a son of Zhou Ling Wang, around 570 BC. According to legend, he gave up the trappings of privilege for a life of a wandering musician. He was taught the mysteries of Daoism by the sage Dao Qiu Gong, and he lived with him for 30 years on Houshi Mountain.

One day he sent a message to his relatives asking them to meet him on the 7th day of the 7th month at the summit of the mountain. At the appointed time he was seen riding through the air upon a white crane (the white stones here), from whose back he waved a final adieu to the world as he ascended to the realms of the immortals.

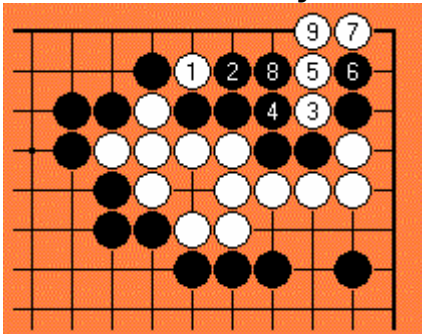
This last act gives a visual clue to the solution.



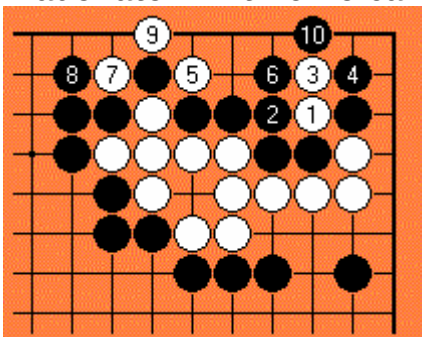
White to play

PROBLEM #14 - SOLUTION

Even if you know the technique to live in the corner, the order of moves is crucial. Cutting first at 1 is important. After White 9 Black suffers from shortage of liberties because of White's cutting stone and so White 3 to 9 have successfully "ascended to heaven".



Omitting the cut at the beginning allows Black to ignore it (5) if it is made later. With 6 he can live in the corner, so White dies.



方朔偷桃

Problem #15

DONGFANG SHUO STEALS THE PEACHES

Dongfang Shuo (160 BC -) was a courtier styled Manqian under the Han emperor Wu (r. 140-87). His brash self-confidence and ready wit won him special favour with the emperor. He served as Gentleman Attendant-in-ordinary then Superior Grand Master of the Palace.

There are many stories about him but most appear apocryphal. In the most famous, he thrice stole and ate some peaches of immortality bestowed by the Queen Mother of the West on the Emperor Wu and which ripen only once every 3,000 years.

In 138 BC an Imperial proclamation was issued, calling for men of parts to assist in the government of the empire, and in response Dongfang Shuo sent in an application which closed with the following words:

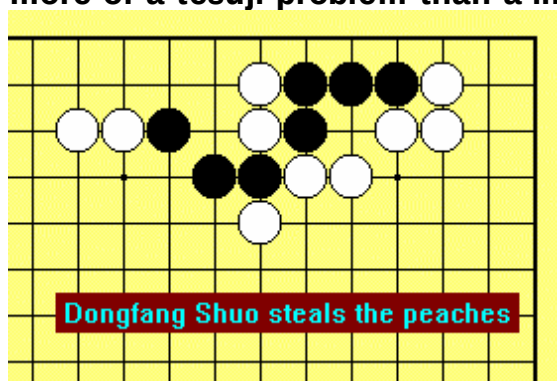
"I am now 22 years of age. I am nine feet three inches in height. My eyes are like swinging pearls, my teeth like a row of shells. I am as brave as Meng Ben, as prompt as Qing Ji, as pure as Bao Shuya, and as devoted as Wei Sheng. I consider myself fit to be a high officer of state; and with my life in my hand I await your Majesty's reply."

He received an appointment and before long was on intimate terms with the Emperor, whom he amused with his wit. On one occasion he drank some elixir of immortality which belonged to the Emperor. The enraged ruler ordered him to be put to death, but Dongfang Shuo smiled and said, *"If the elixir was genuine, your Majesty can do me no harm; if it was not, what harm have I done?"* This story has the ring of truth and may well have been transmuted into the peaches of immortality version.

His mother is said to have been a widow, who became pregnant by a miraculous conception and left home to give birth to her child at a place farther to the eastward, hence the name Dongfang. The boy himself was said to be the incarnation of the planet Venus, and to have appeared on earth in previous births as Feng Hou, Wu Cheng Zi, Lao Zi, and Fan Li. In his late years he fell out of favour and vented his feelings in spiteful essays on the wilfulness of princes.

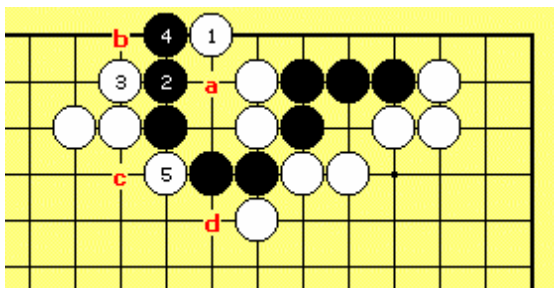
The supernatural story certainly matches the cleverness of the solution. The version here is not quite the original but a form used by Fujisawa Hideyuki in his Tesuji Dictionary. It removes a couple of superfluous stones and makes the problem look even neater. It is also

more of a tesuji problem than a life-and-death one.

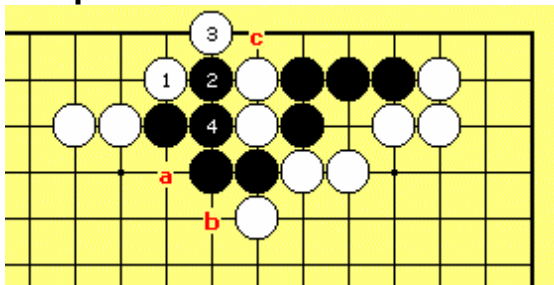


White to play

PROBLEM #15 - SOLUTION



The kosumi White 1 is the supernatural move. If Black 2 is at A, White connects at B. Of course Black can play 4 at C or D to escape, but that is a pitiful result after White connects at 4.



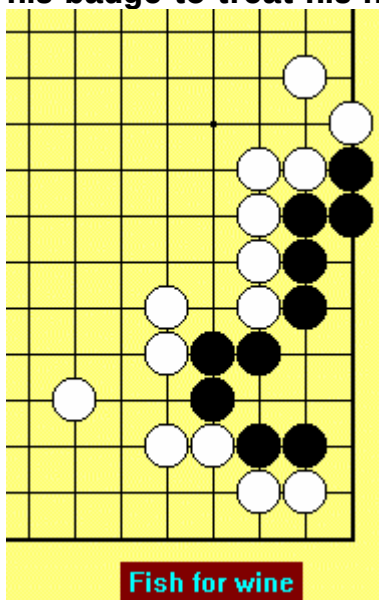
White 1 here fails because of the oi-otoshi (domino) attack by Black. It is true that White can seal Black in in sente with 3 at A, 4, B, but Black then lives with C.

Problem #16

金魚換酒

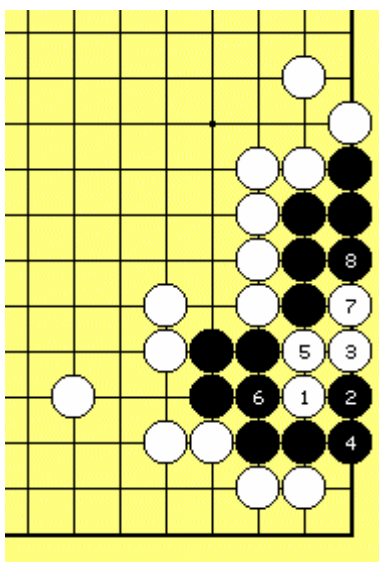
THE GOLDEN FISH EXCHANGED FOR WINE

The black group is the fish. Imagine those fishes with upturned tails on the roofs of old Oriental buildings. But in this case it refers to a badge of rank of the top three grades of officials, which was a tally shaped like a fish. One portion was kept at court and a matching portion by the office-holder. The wine refers to an incident in which official Gao Shi pawned his badge to treat his friend, the famous poet Li Bai.

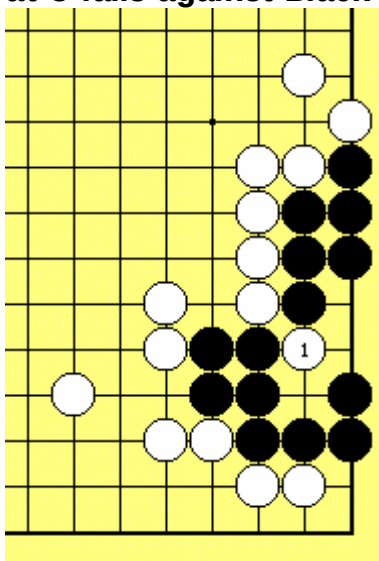


White to play

PROBLEM #16 - SOLUTION



This is an "*under the stones*" problem. Often, once you are familiar with these, the starting shape makes it obvious, but not in this case. White 1 at 3 fails against Black 1.



The *coup de grace* - the fish has been speared.